

Bullying, Cyberbullying and Gang Prevention Language Included in Dept. of Justice Reauthorization Act Passed by House Today

Washington, D.C. - Working to help keep our communities safe, Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (CA-39) assisted passage today of the Department of Justice Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3402) which contains part of her bi-partisan “Bullying and Gang Prevention for School Safety and Crime Reduction Act of 2005” (H.R.283). This bill is expected to be signed into law by the president within the coming days.

“This bill provides new options for schools to finance proven bullying and gang prevention programs. It is essential that we ensure a safe environment for our children, where they can learn and succeed without fear, hurt or intimidation,” said Congresswoman Sánchez.

The provisions of Congresswoman Sánchez’ bill that were included in the Justice Department legislation amend the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) program to allow states and localities to use grant funds for bullying and gang prevention programs, and allows the Attorney General to recommend states use JABG funds for such programs. To address emerging challenges, Sánchez also included language in the Department of Justice Reauthorization Act to combat cyberbullying, which is a new method of bullying perpetrated with new technologies.

“Now that bullies have email accounts, instant messaging, and cell phones, they can threaten and intimidate their victims 24 hours a day. This is a new issue that needs new solutions. My amendment will help schools provide those new approaches for their students,” added Sánchez.

Sánchez’ legislation has the support of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a bipartisan, non-profit organization of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and crime victims dedicated to preventing crime and violence by finding ways to prevent kids from becoming criminals. The group recently completed a study titled, “Bullying Prevention Is Crime Prevention,” that found children who are the victims of bullying are more likely to commit suicide, and bullies are more likely to become adult career criminals as adults.

“More and more children are getting involved in bullying and gang activity at an early age. Bullying and gangs have become an epidemic in our country and prevention is a critical first step. With the passage of this bill, federal funds can be utilized for proven programs that promote safety in our schools, protect our children and make our communities safer,” concluded Sánchez.

Because the Sánchez bill amends existing statutes, it will not require any additional federal funds.